PITTA

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DECCAN BIRDERS EVENTS

In light of the Corona virus (COVID-19) epidemic, all Deccan Birders Field Trips and Indoor Meetings are on hold until further notice. Details of upcoming activities will be communicated once the situation improves.

LEARNING IN NATURE'S LAP

Report: Hasanparthy, Dt Warangal, September 25-30, 2020

Text & Photos: Abhinav Udupi

Blue Rock Thrush

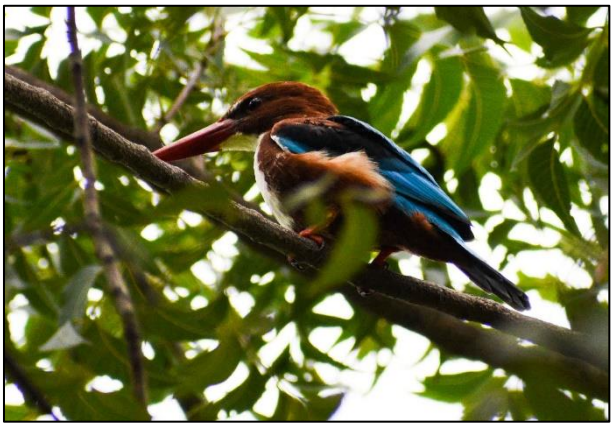
Purple-rumped Sunbird

During the last week of September, I was at Hasanparthy, a suburb of Warangal in Telangana state. My first exposure to birdwatching was in February 2019, when I took part in the Bird Race hosted by Deccan Birders, Hyderabad, but this was the first time I was able to get an experience of birdwatching independently.

Indian Roller

Birdwatching during this period was a delightful experience for me. I spotted the Indian Roller, which is the state bird of three southern states in India – Telangana, Andhra Pradesh and Karnataka.

Rose-ringed Parakeet



White-throated Kingfisher

Red-wattled Lapwing

Red-vented Bulbul

There were close to 20 species of birds that I spotted including Egrets, Herons, Wagtails and the Kingfisher. For a moment, when I think of it, it was an exemplary experience where I got a chance to spot such varied bird species.

Hasanparthy, where I had been for the trip, actually has an educational institution called SR University. Here, nature and its ecosystem are undisturbed and uninterrupted, and the institution is situated in an environment conducive to learning as well as the propagation of natural ecosystems. The Universe is a classroom – and this is exactly the way learning should happen, where children study in the lap of nature.

Scaly-bellied Munia

The full list of the birds spotted in this period is as follows:

Sl. No.	Common Name	Scientific Name	Sl. No.	Common Name	Scientific Name
1	Red-vented Bulbul	*Pycnonotus cafer*	10	Black Drongo	*Dicrurus macrocercus*
2	Green Bee-eater	*Merops orientalis*	11	Blue Rock Thrush	*Monticola solitarius*
3	Yellow-billed Babbler	*Turdoides affinis*	12	Indian Roller	*Coracias benghalensis*
4	Red-wattled Lapwing	*Vanellus indicus*	13	Indian Pond Heron	*Ardeola grayii*
5	White-browed Wagtail	*Motacilla maderaspatensis*	14	Bronze-winged Jacana	*Metopidius indicus*
6	Black-winged Kite	*Elanus caeruleus*	15	Rose-ringed Parakeet	*Psittacula krameri*
7	White-throated Kingfisher	*Halcyon smyrnensis*	16	Indian Robin	*Saxicoloides fulicatus*
8	Purple-rumped Sunbird	*Leptocoma zeylonica*	17	Intermediate Egret	*Mesophoyx intermedia*
9	Scaly-breasted Munia	*Lonchura punctulata*			

Some other photos taken during this period:

Green Bee-eater

White-browed Wagtail

Yellow-billed Babbler

Intermediate Egret

* * *

Bird Humour

Umesh Mani

DON'T WORRY ABOUT PICKING UP ANYTHING ON YOUR WAY HOME, HONEY.
DINNER SHOULD BE READY IN ABOUT... OH...TWENTY MINUTES.
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(Received on WhatsApp, September 2020)

An update on the Asian vulture crisis – Current priorities and a South India perspective

Christopher GR Bowden

Long-billed Vulture chicks (Photo: Chris Bowden)

The dramatic declines in vulture populations across South Asia over the past twenty years were caused foremost by diclofenac being used as a veterinary painkiller in cattle and causing gout and kidney failure in vulture that have fed on the carcasses of recently treated cattle (Pain et al. 2008)[9]. 24 partner organisations of the Saving Asia's Vultures from Extinction (SAVE) consortium have been working together with regional and state governments to implement the agreed priority actions from a regional perspective, and supported by sound scientific information.

A national summary and vulture policy has recently been agreed by Indian SAVE Partners and its Technical Advisory Committee ahead of updating the Government National Vulture Action Plan, last produced back in 2006. This summary highlights how, despite the landmark steps taken so far – the veterinary diclofenac ban in 2006, and the diclofenac vials size restriction in 2015 – it is these veterinary drugs (including new compounds) that caused the catastrophic declines and still pose the greatest ongoing threats across India. So the priority actions for India are bans of further veterinary drugs, and even more immediately, the vulture-safety-testing of further drugs by the Indian Veterinary Research Institute, together with Bombay Natural History Society (BNHS). The BNHS breeding and release programme is also important, as a way to secure populations of the species in captivity at least, but more immediately to release birds back to the wild, thereby raising the profile of the issues, and checking the safety of the environment.

Probably the most significant recent development has been in Nepal, where there has been strong endorsement of the combined measures to remove diclofenac from veterinary use – both through legislation and through on the ground Vulture Safe Zone (VSZ) work – resulting in the first strong evidence for regional population recoveries of White-rumped and Slender-billed Vultures (Galligan *et al.* 2019)[5]. The population trend for both species switched from strongly negative to strongly positive at about the time that the national awareness-raising and education campaign about diclofenac became fully effective. The actions taken in Nepal have had major impact and are encouraging more initiatives on the ground in India, and in Bangladesh (where the VSZs are formally gazetted by the government, and ketoprofen bans imposed at this regional level).

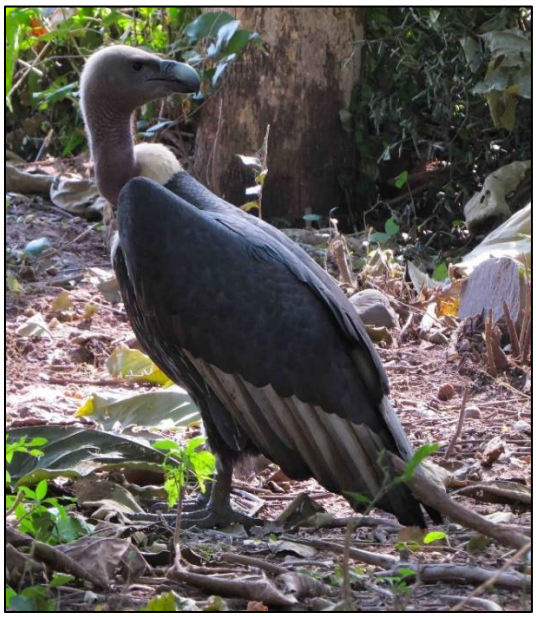
However, these initiatives still need further follow-up, especially in India, to avoid undoing all the hard work over the past twenty years. Undercover pharmacy surveys are showing mixed trends across the region, and that other vulture-toxic drugs are increasing in most areas (Cuthbert et al. 2011, Galligan et al. 2020)[2,6], but in Nepal at least the use of veterinary diclofenac is almost down to zero. This has added confidence to proceed with the release programme of captive birds, with 30 White-rumped Vultures now released in three batches, all close to Chitwan National Park. A further 30 wild birds have been satellite-tagged in the area to understand their movements and allow a quick response to any mortality for diagnosing the exact cause. So far, so good, but vigilant monitoring of the fate of the tagged birds is essential.

White-rumped Vultures emerging from aviary for release
(Photo courtesy: Bird Conservation Nepal)

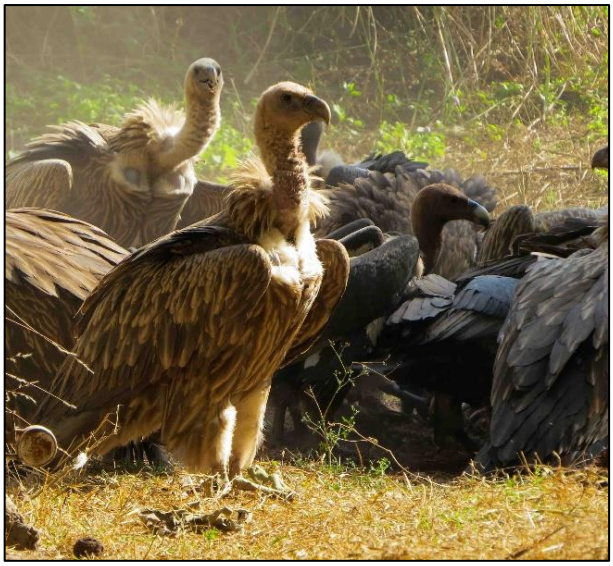
Recently released immature White-rumped Vultures enjoying their freedom
(Photo courtesy: Bird Conservation Nepal)

Recently released White-rumped Vulture in flight
(Photo courtesy: Bird Conservation Nepal)

Meanwhile, the very first release of eight White-rumped Vultures has taken place in India in early October 2020 in Haryana, although there are some significant lingering concerns as to whether the environment there is sufficiently cleared of diclofenac, so at this stage this is very much a test release which will be carefully monitored.



White-rumped Vulture (Photo: Chris Bowden)



Immature Himalayan Griffon with White-rumped Vultures in the background (Photo: Chris Bowden)

The colony aviary in Pinjore, Haryana (Photo: Chris Bowden)

At Haryana, the breeding program for the Long-billed (or Indian) Vulture is going very well, as for the Slender-billed and White-rumped Vultures at the other centres.

Long-billed Vulture in flight (Photo: Mandy West)

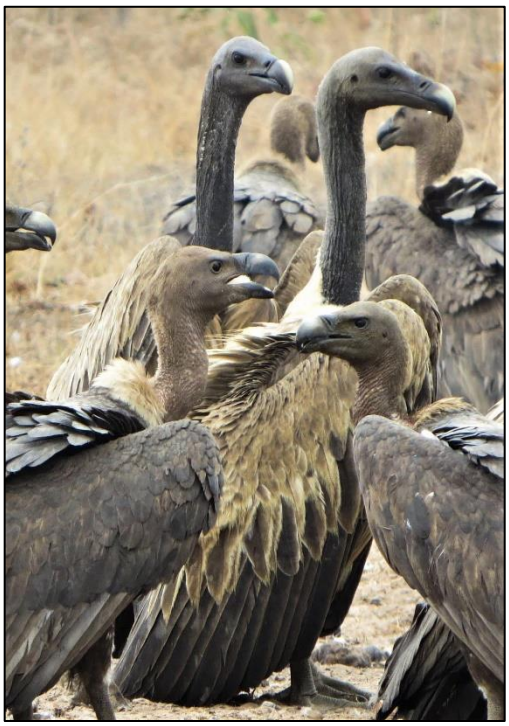
The increasing engagement and financial commitment of the Indian government, especially in recent years has been encouraging, and now supports the bulk of the vulture breeding and release programmes, bringing with it important profile to the issue. Pilot releases of rehabilitated Himalayan Griffons happened earlier in Haryana and, more recently, in West Bengal where satellite tags were deployed in India for the first time on released vultures. These releases add important impetus for getting the environment safer and taking the necessary steps more widely.

Five tagged Himalayan Griffons ready for release in West Bengal, December 2019 (Photo: Chris Bowden)

First Himalayan Griffon to leave the aviary in West Bengal (Photo: Chris Bowden)

Release aviary in Buxa, West Bengal (Photo: Chris Bowden)

West Bengal also yields intermittent sightings of the rarest of the vultures, the Slender-billed Vulture. Globally, the stronghold of the Slender-billed Vulture is in nearby Assam, with approximately half the world population of around 1500 birds being found there.



Slender-billed Vulture (Photo: Chris Bowden)

<u>An updated vulture policy document for India</u>

The Indian SAVE partners recently agreed on a summary policy document highlighting the key actions needed.

This includes an important summary of which NSAIDs are the key threats, and the key references:

Drug name	Threat / Safety	Known effect
Meloxicam	Safe	Tested and shown to be safe for vultures (Swarup D. *et al.* 2007)[12]
Tolfenamic acid	Probably safe	Currently being tested and so far results are positive (to be fully confirmed shortly)
Carprofen	Toxic at high doses	Shown to be at toxic levels for cattle tissues around the injection site (Fourie *et al.* 2015)[3]
Flunixin	Toxic	Shown to be toxic to *Gyps* vultures in Spain and Italy
Nimesulide	Probably toxic	Banned in many countries due to safety issues in humans and banned in India for under 12s. Fast becoming popular across India. There have been several cases of dead wild vultures with gout and nimesulide but no diclofenac
Aceclofenac	Confirmed toxic	Metabolises into diclofenac in cattle so equivalent effect to diclofenac (Galligan *et al.* 2016, Sharma 2012) [4, 11]
Ketoprofen	Confirmed toxic	Trials carried out on Gyps vultures showed toxicity at concentrations found in treated cattle in India (Naidoo *et al.* 2009)[7]
Diclofenac	Confirmed toxic	Confirmed highly toxic in 2003 (Oaks *et al.* 2004)[8], and banned as veterinary drug since 2006

Table 1. Veterinary drugs which threaten vultures

The IVRI and BNHS safety-testing urgently needs to progress, and one brighter piece of news to emerge is that an additional safe drug, tolfenamic acid (Table 1), is likely to be confirmed very shortly – but otherwise it is only meloxicam that is fully confirmed as a safe alternative for use by the veterinarians since 2005 (Swarup et al. 2007)[12]. This new development for tolfenamic acid will be particularly welcome positive news, as otherwise there are increasingly urgent concerns regarding the growing popularity of nimesulide, aceclofenac, ketoprofen, flunixin and others, which remain in legal use despite the growing body of evidence that shows they are also vulture killers (see Table 1 above). Encouragingly, some Indian state governments have agreed not to distribute these other toxic drugs to their veterinary services, ahead of formal bans, and we hope that others will follow this example. But meanwhile, the important IVRI safety testing needs to be extended quickly to include the full set of available drugs, and ultimately to any new drugs ahead of their licenses being approved.

Unfortunately, further surveillance of which veterinary drugs are being used has shown that both Cambodia and Myanmar have recently started using veterinary diclofenac. The Cambodia consortium, Cambodia Vulture Working Group successfully lobbied for a ban, which was agreed and legally implemented less than a year after this request was made – a highly commendable step. Indeed, this and India's readiness to ban veterinary diclofenac was commended at the recent 13th meeting of the Conference of Parties to the Convention on Migratory Species (CMS CoP13) held in Gujarat, as an important example for European countries like Spain to follow.

Secondary threats, notably of poison baits (usually retaliatory and targeting dogs or large carnivores – please note, this is the most widespread threat for European and African vultures) and threats of power infrastructure (electrocution and collision with wires, pylons and wind turbines) are emerging in South Asia and need attention. Developing a database of all vulture mortalities is underway, to better clarify and update the respective importance of these, and messaging will need to incorporate these problems, along with vulture sensitivity mapping being carried out ahead of installation of power infrastructures. This is an important area where birdwatchers can contribute – both by reporting all their vulture sightings on eBird and, if any carcass of a dead vulture is found, to urgently report it and find ways to get an autopsy and take tissue samples to ascertain the cause of death.

South India has never had quite the same super-abundance of vultures as the northern 'cow-belt' states of India, but has nevertheless still suffered catastrophic declines in vulture densities, and there is reason to believe that diclofenac was the major cause here too. There was a workshop and report reviewing the situation, held in Ooty in January 2018. The recommendations agreed were for coordinated surveys and monitoring both of vultures and of veterinary drugs, but also acknowledging that poison-baits may have played a role in earlier declines (where extensive cattle rearing meant that they were very susceptible to being preyed upon), and that there may be some useful synergies between countering this threat targeting tigers and leopards, and accidentally poisoning vultures. But this again reiterates the need for quick reporting and autopsy of any dead vultures found in future, and note here that Karnataka Veterinary College in Bangalore is offering to carry out such autopsies free of charge to support this cause. It was also agreed that Vulture Safe Zone initiatives have an important role to play and such work should be supported where these scientifically-backed messages are carefully highlighted.

Despite the recent progress and lessons from Nepal, and the growing numbers of captive bred birds available for release, there are recent reports of ongoing declines from Gujarat (where NSAIDs are implicated), and also Cambodia (where other threats including poison-baits are key). The ongoing need for monitoring the vulture population and threats through documenting causes of vulture mortality is clear, and if the NSAIDs threats can be taken care of – and this is something that really can be resolved given the political will – then other issues faced by vultures can be understood and addressed.

For more details on the NSAIDs and all of these updates, you can consult the NSAID Alert, Resources and News pages of www.save-vultures.org[10]. Also note that the SAVE Blueprint is the main resource that feeds into the Convention of Migratory Species' Vulture Multispecies Action Plan (Botha et al. 2017)[1] which is a major resource and more formally underpins the actions needed that are mentioned above.

Participants at the SAVE meeting near Pinjore, Haryana, November 2019 (Photo: Chris Bowden)

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* * *

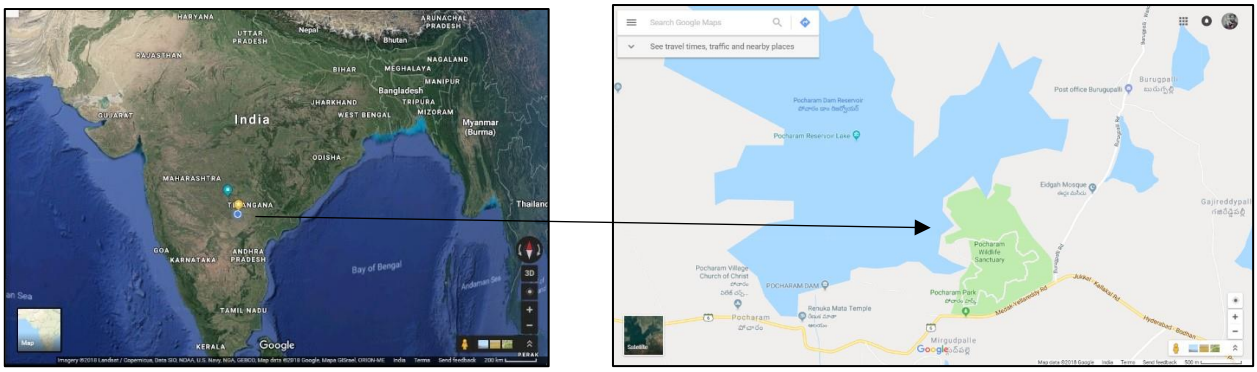
Avifaunal Diversity Of Pocharam Wildlife Sanctuary, Medak

Text: G Sailu & J Swamy; Photos: G Sailu

Background

India is one of the 12 mega biodiversity countries of the world and one among the 196 signatories to the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD) at Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro in 1992. Recognizing the sovereign rights of States to use their own biological resources, the Convention expects the parties to facilitate access to genetic resources by other parties subject to national legislation and on mutually agreed upon terms (Article 3 and 15 of CBD). Article 8(j) of the Convention on Biological Diversity recognizes contributions of local and indigenous communities towards the conservation and sustainable utilization of biological resources through traditional knowledge, practices and innovations, and provides for equitable sharing of benefits with such people arising from the utilization of their knowledge, practices and innovations (Biological Diversity Act, 2002).

India has only 2.4% of the world's land area, but harbours 7-8% of all recorded species, including over 45,000 species of plants and 91,000 species of animals. It is also amongst the few countries that have developed a biogeographic classification for conservation planning, and has mapped biodiversity-rich areas in the country. Of the 34 global biodiversity hotspots, four are present in India, represented by the Himalayas, the Western Ghats, the North-east and the Nicobar Islands. Considering the outstanding universal value and exceptionally high levels of endemism in the Western Ghats, 39 sites in the States of Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu and Maharashtra have been inscribed on the United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) World Heritage List in 2012 (India's Fifth National Report to the Convention on Biological Diversity, 2014).



Pocharam Lake & Wildlife Sanctuary

Telangana State, separated from the erstwhile Andhra Pradesh on 2nd June 2014, is situated in the central stretch of the eastern seaboard of the Indian Peninsula. Telangana state has an area of 114,840 sq km. The area is divided into two main regions, the Eastern Ghats and the plains (Pullaiah, 2015).

Pocharam Wildlife Sanctuary, named after Pocharam village and lake, was created by construction of a dam across Allair river (a tributary of Manjeera river) during the early part of the 20th century. The sanctuary, covering an area of 130 km2, is spread across parts of Medak and Nizamabad districts. With damming of the river and consequent water outflow into the forests in the vicinity, forests here flourished well supporting rich and diverse biota. This had prompted the erstwhile Government of Hyderabad State to declare the area as a Wildlife Sanctuary in 1952.

The Sanctuary, with its rich forest patch, and the associated lake is critical for the survival of wildlife in the area. It is located at a distance of 115 km from Hyderabad. Though the Sanctuary harbours rich floral and faunal wealth, not much documentation work has been undertaken, and there is scope for enhanced utilization of this information for conservation and scientific management.

Hence, we had carried out a one-year study at Pocharam Wildlife Sanctuary, Medak district, with the intention of generating baseline data about avifaunal diversity present in the area and assessing the need for conservation efforts for the habitats in that region. A total of 237 species of birds were recorded during the study.

Methodology

All observations were conducted on foot and were aided by the use of binoculars; photo documentation was also obtained with the help of cameras with zoom lenses. Avifauna was recorded by direct count method from vantage points. A total of 237 bird species, including migratory and resident birds, were recorded; these were identified using the Salim Ali and the Grimmett & Inskipp field guides.

Observations & Discussion

The study was carried out in the Sanctuary and fringe villages from August 2019 to July 2020. Most of the avifauna listed were observed in Pocharam lake and Sanctuary area – especially Parvatapur area, which is in the core area of the Sanctuary, and has unique forest cover and rich biodiversity.

About 150 species of birds were recorded near Pocharam Lake during the summer season and monsoon. We observed that the number of bird species increased during the pre-monsoon as compared to summer season; the reptile population also increased around monsoon.

One of the interesting species recorded by C. Srinivasulu *et al* during in February 2011, the Jerdon's Baza, was unfortunately not seen during our study. Several owl species are there in the area, but given the practical constraints of traveling in the night and early morning hours, we could record only a few species.

It was observed that communities living close to the alluvial area relied the most on the protected area due to their lack of permanent agricultural land. Resources from Pocharam Sanctuary play an important role in the livelihood of communities living in its vicinity; for instance, it was noted that:

- People collect wild fruits (Custard apple, chironji, amla, tamarind, jamun, etc) for their own consumption;
- Fringe villagers take their animals to the forest for grazing;
- Water from the Pocharam lake flows to various locations for agriculture and industrial purposes

The high volume of vehicular traffic passing through the area, however, leads to numerous road kills every day. In the interest of wildlife, forest conservation and sustainable development, it would be good if existing roads within protected areas (PA) like Pocharam could be provided alternative alignment.

Conclusions

Invasive species: They are one of the major causes of biodiversity loss in forest, aquatic and agricultural ecosystems. In terms of flora and fauna, we need to take the necessary measures to eradicate these species.

Household dependency on the PA: Local communities living adjacent to PAs play a vital role in biodiversity conservation. Understanding communities' use and perceptions of a PA will increase conservation effectiveness through reducing anthropogenic pressures and improving park-people relationships.

Protected area demarcation: Considering that the forest resources are limited owing to the small size of the Sanctuary, it seems prudent to increase the size by integrating the potentially rich and ecologically fragile areas, which are adjacent to the PA – for instance, the contiguous forest areas of Lingampet Reserve Forest on the northwest side, and Gangapur Reserve Forest in the southeast side of the Pocharam Wildlife Sanctuary. This is critical for augmenting and conserving the natural resource base of the Sanctuary in the long term.

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Some photos taken during the study:

Siberian Stonechat

Common Iora

Brahminy Starling

Purple-rumped Sunbird female

Baya Weaver

House Sparrow

Oriental Magpie Robin male

Grey Heron

Scaly-breasted Munia

Ashy Prinia

Red-vented Bulbul with nesting material

The full list of bird species seen at Pocharam during the study is given below:

S. No.	Common Name	Scientific Name	Telugu Name
1	Northern Pintail	*Anas acuta*	Soodithoka Bathu
2	Common Teal	*Anas crecca*	Parjaa
3	Indian Spot-billed Duck	*Anas poecilorhyncha*	Mukku Chukka Bathu
4	Bar-headed Goose	*Anser indicus*	Thella Pedda Bathu
5	Common Pochard	*Aythya ferina*	Boodida Rangu Rekka Chiluva
6	Lesser Whistling-duck	*Dendrocygna javanica*	Eelavese Chinna Chiluva
7	Eurasian Wigeon	*Mareca penelope*	Namam Bathu
8	Gadwall	*Mareca strepera*	Ella Reppala Bathu
9	Red-crested Pochard	*Netta rufina*	Errathala Chiluva
10	Cotton Pygmy-goose	*Nettapus coromandelianus*	Doodi Chiluva
11	Comb Duck	*Sarkidiornis melanotos*	Jutu Chiluva
12	Northern Shoveler	*Spatula clypeata*	Chamcha Moothi Bathu
13	Garganey	*Spatula querquedula*	Cheruvu Bathu
14	Ruddy Shelduck	*Tadorna ferruginea*	Bapana Bathu
15	Rain Quail	*Coturnix coromandelica*	Nallabora Elise
16	Painted Francolin	*Francolinus pictus*	Kakera Kamju
17	Grey Francolin	*Francolinus pondicerianus*	Boodida Rangu Kamju
18	Painted Spurfowl	*Galloperdix lunulata*	Jita Kodi
19	Indian Peafowl	*Pavo cristatus*	Nemali
20	Rock Bush Quail	*Perdicula argoondah*	Raathi Poda Elise
21	Jungle Bush Quail	*Perdicula asiatica*	Adavipoda Elise
22	Greater Flamingo	*Phoenicopterus roseus*	Raja Hamsa
23	Little Grebe	*Tachybaptus ruficollis*	Chinna Munugu Kodi

S. No.	Common Name	Scientific Name	Telugu Name
24	Rock Pigeon	*Columba livia*	Gaddi Pavuramu
25	Spotted Dove	*Streptopelia chinensis*	Chukkala Guvva
26	Eurasian Collared Dove	*Streptopelia decaocto*	Peddabella Guvva
27	Laughing Dove	*Streptopelia senegalensis*	Sovatha Guvva
28	Chestnut-bellied Sandgrouse	*Pterocles exustus*	Jam Polanki
29	Painted Sandgrouse	*Pterocles indicus*	-
30	Savanna Nightjar	*Caprimulgus affinis*	Savannaa Reyi Pita
31	Indian Nightjar	*Caprimulgus asiaticus*	Bharatha Reyi Pita
32	Jerdon's Nightjar	*Caprimulgus atripennis*	Jerdon Reyi Pita
33	Jungle Nightjar	*Caprimulgus indicus*	Boodidarangu Reyi Pita
34	Indian House Swift	*Apus affinis*	Bharatha Chataka Pakshi
35	Common Swift	*Apus apus*	Oora Kolanki
36	Asian Palm Swift	*Cypsiurus balasiensis*	Chataka Pakshi
37	Crested Treeswift	*Hemiprocne coronata*	Jutulavadi Chetla Kolanki
38	Grey-bellied Cuckoo	*Cacomantis passerinus*	Boodida Rangu Pota Kokila
39	Lesser Coucal	*Centropus bengalensis*	Chinna Jamudu Kaaki
40	Greater Coucal	*Centropus sinensis*	Pedda Jamudu Kaaki
41	Pied Cuckoo	*Clamator jacobinus*	Gola Kaaki
42	Indian Cuckoo	*Cuculus micropterus*	Desheeya Kokila
43	Asian Koel	*Eudynamys scolopaceus*	Kovela
44	Blue-faced Malkoha	*Phaenicophaeus viridirostris*	Pacha Mukku Vaamana Kaaki
45	Drongo Cuckoo	*Surniculus lugubris*	Ithrintha Kokila
46	Pale-billed Flowerpecker	*Dicaeum erythrorhynchos*	-
47	Thick-billed Flowerpecker	*Dicaeum agile*	Dalasarimukku Poopoduchu Jita
48	White-breasted Waterhen	*Amaurornis phoenicurus*	Thella Borra Neeti Kodi
49	Common Coot	*Fulica atra*	Nallaboli Kodi
50	Watercock	*Gallicrex cinerea*	Neeti Kodi
51	Common Moorhen	*Gallinula chloropus*	Jambu Kodi
52	Grey-headed swamphen	*Porphyrio poliocephalus*	Oodi Chenchu Kodi
53	Ruddy-breasted Crake	*Porzana fusca*	Erraborra Vadi Kodi
54	Asian Openbill	*Anastomus oscitans*	Therapi Mokku Konga
55	Black Stork	*Ciconia nigra*	Nalla Konga
56	Painted Stork	*Mycteria leucocephala*	Errakaalla Konga
57	Spot-billed Pelican	*Pelecanus philippensis*	Chukkala Mukku Chinka Bathu
58	Great Egret	*Ardea alba*	Pedda Thella Konga
59	Grey Heron	*Ardea cinerea*	Narayana Pakshi
60	Intermediate Egret	*Ardea intermedia*	Thella Konga
61	Purple Heron	*Ardea purpurea*	Erranarayana Pakshi
62	Indian Pond Heron	*Ardeola grayii*	Guddi Konga
63	Cattle Egret	*Bubulcus ibis*	Santi Konga
64	Striated Heron	*Butorides striatus*	Dosi Konga
65	Little Egret	*Egretta garzetta*	Chinna Thella Konga
66	Cinnamon Bittern	*Ixobrychus cinnamomeus*	Erra Vaakhi
67	Black Bittern	*Ixobrychus flavicollis*	Nalla Vaakhi
68	Yellow Bittern	*Ixobrychus sinensis*	Pasupu Vaakhi
69	Black-crowned Night Heron	*Nycticorax nycticorax*	Chintha Vaakhi
70	Eurasian Spoonbill	*Platalea leucorodia*	Theddu Moothi Konga
71	Glossy Ibis	*Plegadis falcinellus*	Thaati Kankanam
72	Red-naped Ibis	*Pseudibis papillosa*	Nalla Kankanam
73	Black-headed Ibis	*Threskiornis melanocephalus*	Nalla Thala Kankanam
74	Little Cormorant	*Microcarbo niger*	Chinna Neeti Kaaki
75	Great Cormorant	*Phalacrocorax carbo*	Pedda Neeti Kaaki

S. No.	Common Name	Scientific Name	Telugu Name
76	Indian Cormorant	*Phalacrocorax fuscicollis*	Neeti Kaaki
77	Oriental Darter	*Anhinga melanogaster*	Pamu Bathu
78	Eurasian Thick-knee	*Burhinus oedicnemus*	Raathi Kaledu
79	Great Thick-knee	*Esacus recurvirostris*	Pedda Raathi Kaledu
80	Black-winged Stilt	*Himantopus himantopus*	Nallarekkala Ullankipita
81	Pied Avocet	*Recurvirostra avosetta*	Bata Pravala Pedda Ullanki
82	Kentish Plover	*Charadrius alexandrinus*	Chinna Baithu Ullanki
83	Little Ringed Plover	*Charadrius dubius*	Baithu Ullanki
84	Lesser Sand Plover	*Charadrius mongolus*	Chinna Isuka Ullanki
85	Grey Plover	*Pluvialis squatarola*	Boodidarangu Ullanki
86	Red-wattled Lapwing	*Vanellus indicus*	Yanappa Chivata
87	Yellow-wattled Lapwing	*Vanellus malabaricus*	Chivata
88	Greater Painted-snipe	*Rostratula benghalensis*	Pedda Kuruvi
89	Pheasant-tailed Jacana	*Hydrophasianus chirurgus*	Jamudu Thoka Jakana
90	Bronze-winged Jacana	*Metopidius indicus*	Kanchurakkala Jakana
91	Common Sandpiper	*Actitis hypoleucos*	Ullanki
92	Curlew Sandpiper	*Calidris ferruginea*	Ullanki
93	Little Stint	*Calidris minuta*	Chinna Ullanki
94	Common Snipe	*Gallinago gallinago*	Ullamu Kuruvi
95	Black-tailed Godwit	*Limosa limosa*	Thondu Ullanki
96	Spotted Redshank	*Tringa erythropus*	Pedda Erra Kalla Ullanki
97	Wood Sandpiper	*Tringa glareola*	Podala Ullanki
98	Common Greenshank	*Tringa nebularia*	Pacha Kalla Ullanki
99	Marsh Sandpiper	*Tringa stagnatilis*	Chitadi Ullanki
100	Common Redshank	*Tringa totanus*	Erra Kalla Ullanki
101	Indian Courser	*Cursorius coromandelicus*	Erra Chivata
102	Little Pratincole	*Glareola lactea*	Chinna Lola Pakshi
103	Oriental Pratincole	*Glareola maldivarum*	Pedda Lola Pakshi
104	Black-bellied Tern	*Sterna acuticauda*	Nalla Pota Ramadasu
105	River Tern	*Sterna aurantia*	Ramadasu
106	Osprey	*Pandion haliaetus*	-
107	Shikra	*Accipiter badius*	Jaladega
108	Bonelli's Eagle	*Aquila fasciata*	Kundeli Salava
109	White-eyed Buzzard	*Butastur teesa*	Buda Mali Gadda
110	Long-legged Buzzard	*Buteo rufinus*	Korre Gadda
111	Pallid Harrier	*Circus macrourus*	Uduthala Gadda
112	Pied Harrier	*Circus melanoleucos*	Bata Pilli Gadda
113	Montagu's Harrier	*Circus pygargus*	Moun Tegu Pilli Gadda
114	Black-winged Kite	*Elanus caeruleus*	Adavi Ramadasu
115	Brahminy Kite	*Haliastur indus*	Bapana Gadda
116	Booted Eagle	*Hieraaetus pennatus*	Uduthala Gadda
117	Black Kite	*Milvus migrans*	Mala Gadda
118	Oriental Honey-buzzard	*Pernis ptilorhynchus*	Thee Gadda
119	Crested Serpent Eagle	*Spilornis cheela*	Nalla Pamula Gadda
120	Spotted Owlet	*Athene brama*	Pagidigante
121	Indian Grey Hornbill	*Ocyceros birostris*	Kommu Kasiri
122	Common Hoopoe	*Upupa epops*	Kookudu Pita
123	White-naped Woodpecker	*Chrysocolaptes festivus*	Thella Meda Vadrangi Pita
124	Coppersmith Barbet	*Psilopogon haemacephalus*	Kamsali Pita
125	Chestnut-headed Bee-eater	*Merops leschenaulti*	Penku Rangu Thala Passiriki
126	Green Bee-eater	*Merops orientalis*	Chinna Passiriki

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127	Blue-tailed Bee-eater	*Merops philippinus*	Kommu Passiriki
128	Indian Roller	*Coracias benghalensis*	Palapita
129	Common Kingfisher	*Alcedo a1his*	Chinnaa Nilabuchigaadu
130	Pied Kingfisher	*Ceryle rudis*	Neela Buchigaadu
131	White-throated Kingfisher	*Halcyon smyrnensis*	Thella Gonthu Buchigaadu
132	Common Kestrel	*Falco tinnunculus*	Thondala Moochidega
133	Plum-headed Parakeet	*Psi1acula cyanocephala*	Ramachiluka
134	Rose-ringed Parakeet	*Psi1acula krameri*	Chiluka
135	Small Minivet	*Pericrocotus cinnamomeus*	Chinna Kumkumpoojita
136	Scarlet Minivet	*Pericrocotus flammeus*	Kumkumpoojita
137	Eurasian Golden Oriole	*Oriolus oriolus*	Vangapandu
138	Ashy Woodswallow	*Artamus fuscus*	Thaadi Pita
139	Common Woodshrike	*Tephrodornis pondicerianus*	Chinna Oolapita
140	Large Woodshrike	*Tephrodornis virgatus*	Pedda Oolapita
141	Common Iora	*Aegithina tiphia*	Pasupu Jita
142	White-bellied Drongo	*Dicrurus caerulescens*	Thellapota Etrintha
143	Ashy Drongo	*Dicrurus leucophaeus*	Boodidarangu Etrintha
144	Black Drongo	*Dicrurus macrocercus*	Nalla Etrintha
145	Greater Racket-tailed Drongo	*Dicrurus poradiscus*	-
146	White-throated Fantail	*Rhipidura albicollis*	Thella Meda Dasari Pita
147	White-browed Fantail	*Rhipidura aureola*	Thella Kanubommala Dasari Pita
148	Brown Shrike	*Lanius cristatus*	Erra Bilinchi
149	Southern Grey Shrike	*Lanius meridionalis*	-
150	Long-tailed Shrike	*Lanius schach*	Podugu Thoka Bilinchi
151	Bay-backed Shrike	*Lanius vittatus*	China Bilinchi
152	House Crow	*Corvus splendens*	Kaaki
153	Rufous Treepie	*Dendrocitta vagabunda*	Erra Gokurayi
154	Black-naped Monarch	*Hypothymis azurea*	Nalla Moosa Dasari Pita
155	Indian Paradise-flycatcher	*Terpsiphone paradisi*	Thika Pigili Pita
156	Pale-billed Flowerpecker	*Dicaeum erythrorhynchos*	Palina Mukku
157	Purple Sunbird	*Cinnyris asiaticus*	Oodaa Thene Pita
158	Purple-rumped Sunbird	*Leptocoma zeylonica*	Modaga Jita
159	Golden-fronted Leafbird	*Chloropsis aurifrons*	Bangaru Rommu Aakupita
160	Baya Weaver	*Ploceus philippinus*	Pasupu Pita
161	Red Avadavat	*Amandava amandava*	Yarra Jinuvayi
162	Indian Silverbill	*Euodice malabarica*	Januvayi
163	Black-headed Munia	*Lonchura malacca*	Nalla Jinuvayi
164	Scaly-breasted Munia	*Lonchura punctulata*	Chukkala Jinuvayi
165	House Sparrow	*Passer domesticus*	Oora Pichuka
166	Paddyfield Pipit	*Anthus rufulus*	Bharatha Jitangi
167	Tree Pipit	*Anthus trivialis*	Pacha Veepu Likku Jita
168	Forest Wagtail	*Dendronanthus indicus*	Adavi Jitangi
169	White Wagtail	*Motacilla alba*	Thella Jitangi
170	Grey Wagtail	*Motacilla cinerea*	Boodida Rangu Jitangi
171	White-browed Wagtail	*Motacilla maderaspatensis*	Thella Kampa Jita
172	Oriental Skylark	*Alauda gulgula*	Bhardwaja Pakshi
173	Rufous-tailed Lark	*Ammomanes phoenicura*	Ambali Jorigadu
174	Greater Short-toed Lark	*Calandrella brachydactyla*	Goppa China Chandul
175	Ashy-crowned Sparrow Lark	*Eremopterix griseus*	Potti Picchika
176	Sykes's Lark	*Galerida deva*	Saik China Chandul
177	Jerdon's Bushlark	*Mirafra affinis*	Jordan Eela Jita
178	Singing Bushlark	*Mirafra cantillans*	Burruta Pita

S. No.	Common Name	Scientific Name	Telugu Name
179	Indian Bushlark	*Mirafra erythroptera*	Chinna Eela Jita
180	Zitting Cisticola	*Cisticola juncidis*	-
181	Common Tailorbird	*Orthotomus sutorius*	Likku Jita
182	Rufous-fronted Prinia	*Prinia buchanani*	Erra Rommu Veduru Kampa Jita
183	Grey-breasted Prinia	*Prinia hodgsonii*	Veduru Kampa Jita
184	Plain Prinia	*Prinia inornata*	Sadaa Chitkuruvi
185	Ashy Prinia	*Prinia socialis*	Boodida Rangu Veduru Kampa Jita
186	Jungle Prinia	*Prinia sylvatica*	Kondalotakunna Jita
187	Paddyfield Warbler	*Acrocephalus agricola*	Errakampa Jita
188	Large-billed Reed Warbler	*Acrocephalus orinus*	-
189	Red-rumped Swallow	*Cecropis daurica*	Erranadumu Vana Koyila
190	Barn Swallow	*Hirundo rustica*	Vana Koyila
191	Wire-tailed Swallow	*Hirundo smithii*	Theegathoka Vana Koyila
192	Streak-throated Swallow	*Petrochelidon fluvicola*	Charala Meda Vana Koyila
193	Yellow-browed Bulbul	*Acritillas indica*	Pasupu Maccha Pigili Pita
194	Red-vented Bulbul	*Pycnonotus cafer*	Pigili Pita
195	Red-whiskered Bulbul	*Pycnonotus jocosus*	Thuraka Pigili Pita
196	White-browed Bulbul	*Pycnonotus luteolus*	Poda Pigili Pita
197	Yellow-throated Bulbul	*Pycnonotus xantholaemus*	Konda Poda Pigili Pita
198	Greenish Leaf Warbler	*Seicercus trochiloides*	Pacchakula Patalapita
199	Yellow-eyed Babbler	*Chrysomma sinense*	Pasupukalla Saida
200	Lesser Whitethroat	*Curruca curruca*	Chinna Kampa Pita
201	Oriental White-eye	*Zosterops palpebrosus*	Vella Kanti
202	Tawny-bellied Babbler	*Dumetia hyperythra*	Thella Meda Saida
203	Common Babbler	*Argya caudata*	Chinna Saida
204	Large Grey Babbler	*Argya malcolmi*	Verri Chinda
205	Jungle Babbler	*Turdoides striata*	Adavi Saida Pita
206	Yellow-billed Babbler	*Turdoides affinis*	-
207	Common Myna	*Acridotheres tristis*	Gorinka
208	Jungle Myna	*Acridotheres fuscus*	-
209	Asian Pied Starling	*Gracupica contra*	Vendi Parikipita
210	Rosy Starling	*Pastor roseus*	Gulabi Parikipita
211	Chestnut-tailed Starling	*Sturnia malabarica*	Boodidarangu Thala Parikipita
212	Brahminy Starling	*Sturnia pagodarum*	Nalla Topi Parikipita
213	Common Starling	*Sturnus vulgaris*	Parikipita
214	Oriental Magpie Robin	*Copsychus saularis*	Pedda Nallanchi
215	Blue-throated Flycatcher	*Cyornis rubeculoides*	Neelimeda Eegapatu Pita
216	Tickell's Blue Flycatcher	*Cyornis tickelliae*	Tikkel Neeli Eegapatu Pita
217	Bluethroat	*Luscinia svecica*	Podala Neelikandam
218	Blue-capped Rock Thrush	*Monticola cinclorhyncha*	Neeli Topi Gantepita
219	Blue Rock Thrush	*Monticola solitarius*	Neeli Gantepita
220	Malabar Whistling Thrush	*Myophonus horsfieldii*	Eelavese Gantepita
221	Desert Wheatear	*Oenanthe deserti*	-
222	Black Redstart	*Phoenicurus ochruros*	Nune Buddigadu
223	Pied Bushchat	*Saxicola caprata*	Kampa Nallanchi
224	Siberian Stonechat	*Saxicola maurus*	-
225	Indian Robin	*Saxicoloides fulicatus*	Nallanchi
226	Orange-headed Thrush	*Zoothera citrina*	Narinjarangu Gantepita
227	Indian Blackbird	*Turdus simillimus*	Poda Palisa
228	Tickell's Thrush	*Turdus unicolor*	Tikkel Gantepita

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Bird of the Month

Text and Photo: Umesh Mani

Indian Skimmer (*Rynchops albicollis*)

Indian Skimmer (Kakinada, January 8, 2019)

Order: Charadriiformes
Family: Laridae
Genus: *Rynchops*
Species: *R. albicollis*
Size: 40-43 cm

Description & distribution: The Indian Skimmer, earlier known as the Indian Scissors-bill, is the only one of three Skimmer species in the *Rynchops* genus that is seen in India. It somewhat resembles the Terns, but is easily differentiated by the longer lower mandible, which is knife-like and flexible. It has a black cap, laterally flattened bright orange bill with a yellow tip, black-brown upperparts and clean white underparts. The long, pointed wings show a white trailing edge, and the legs and feet are red. Non-breeding birds are browner and duller coloured. Juvenile birds are greyish-brown above, and show pale fringes to back and wing feathers. The head is whiter, and the bill is orange-brown and black-tipped. Interestingly, young birds have normal horn-coloured bills, with the lower mandible being of the same length as the upper; the lower mandible grows with age. The sexes are similar, though the female is smaller.

The Indian Skimmer is resident near the river systems across northern and central India (like the Indus, Ganges, and Brahmaputra) south to around the Krishna river, and in the Nepalese terai. In winter, they may be seen in the coastal estuaries as far south as Karwar on the western coast, and Chennai and Pondicherry on the eastern coast. There are also vagrant records from Kutch, Rajasthan and Maharashtra, as well as from Oman, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Thailand.

Habitat & behaviour: The Indian Skimmer is usually seen singly or in small groups, near the larger river systems, where it is seen perched on the sandbars, or skimming along the surface of the river with the lower mandible dipped into the river at a gentle angle, ploughing the water for fish; the upper mandible is held open, ready to snap down on any fish that it finds. It may hunt actively during the day as well as during moonlit nights. Flocks sometimes display elaborate maneouvres, taking off together, then wheeling around before settling down again. The usual call is a shrill, chattering scream; sometimes it also utters a nasal *kyap, kyap*. The diet of the Indian Skimmer consists almost exclusively of fish, although it may occasionally take small crustaceans and insect larvae. Its undulating flight consists of a series of several rapid flaps followed by a pause with its wings closed.

Nesting: The Indian Skimmer breeds generally between February and May. It breeds in colonies of up to 40 pairs, along with River Terns and other birds. A low level of brood parasitism has been reported, with the Indian Skimmer laying its eggs in the nests of River Terns. The nest of the Indian Skimmer is an unlined depression in the sand in a dry river bed, sandy inlet or sand bar in the middle of a stream. Incubation happens mainly during the cooler hours, and it is also known to belly-soak to cool the eggs. The usual clutch consists of 3-4 pale pinkish buff or greyish white eggs, blotched and streaked with brown.

Local name: The Indian Skimmer is known as *'Panchira'* in Hindi and Marathi, *'Pancheera'* in Punjabi and '*Jal-hal'* in Gujarati.

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